



Report of **HIGHER UP! VET for Sustainability**

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European Vocational Skills Week 2020

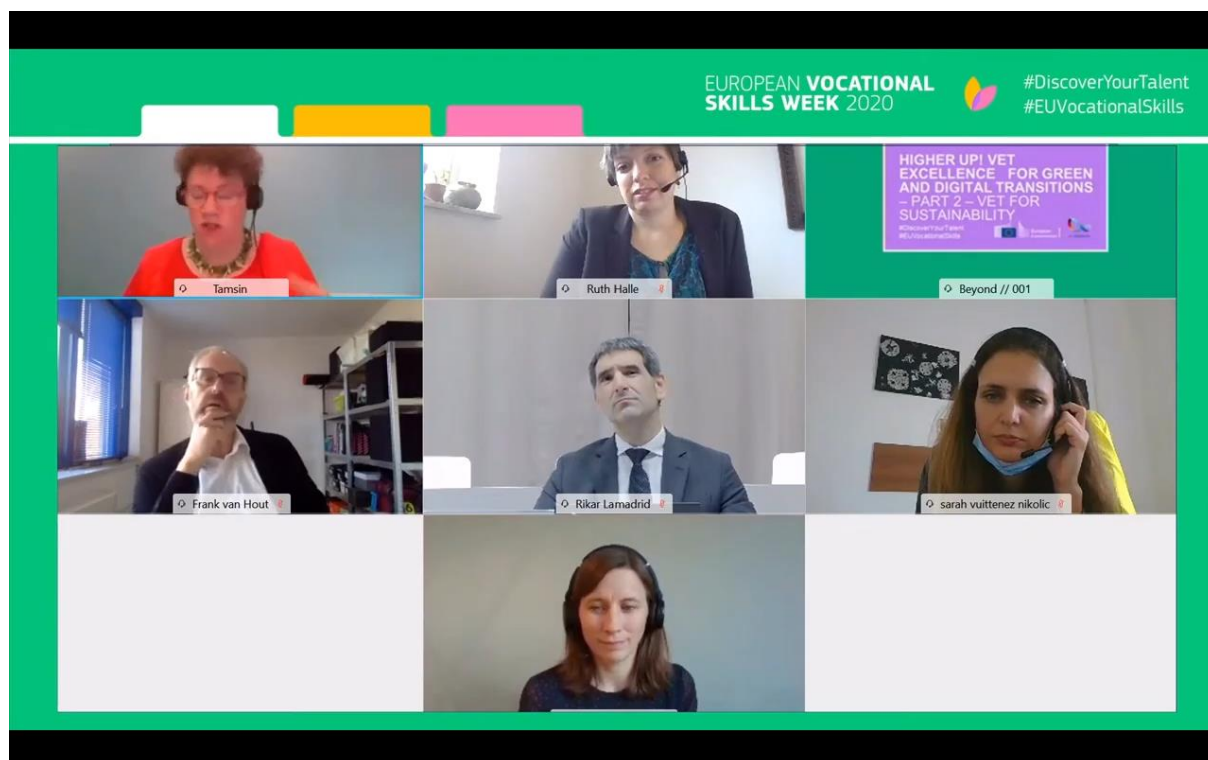
09-13 November 2020

EUROPEAN **VOCATIONAL
SKILLS WEEK** 2020





Report



Format:

Online event; livestreamed

Speakers:

Mrs. Ruth Halle, Technical Advisor, Education / TVET and Labour Competence Centre, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Germany

Mr. Franklin Kimbimbi, Education Officer, European Trade Union Institute

Mr. Rikardo Lamadrid Intxaurreaga, Director of Technology and Advanced Learning, Vice-Ministry of VET, Department of Education of Basque government, Spain

Mrs. Bicca Olin, Board Member, Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)

Mrs. Tamsin Rose, Moderator

Mr. Kestutis Sadauskas, Director for Circular Economy and Green Growth, DG Environment, European Commission



Mrs. Katharina Tomoff, SVP Global Operations, DHL, Supply Chain Management GmbH, Germany

Mrs. Ana Cláudia Valente, Deputy Director, National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training, Portugal

Mr. Frank van Hout, Member of Executive Board, Friesland College, and Member of Board of MBO Raad, Netherlands

Mrs. Sarah Vuittenez, Factory Director, Nestlé, Sofia,

Number of Participants:

171

Main Message:

Europe and the world are facing two major challenges. The decarbonisation of our production processes and our economies and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Especially the education sector was heavily affected by lockdowns and closures. These two transitions accelerate trends that we were already undergoing, namely digitalisation, automatisisation and a change in labour market patterns. There is an enormous role for VET in these two transitions.

This why public institutions and companies alike are investing in green skills, greener production chains and a more circular approach to resources.

Detail of the Meeting:

After a brief introduction by moderator Tasmin Rose the first speaker of the morning was **Mr. Kestutis Sadauskas of the European Commission's DG Environment**. In his speech Mr. Sadauskas stressed the importance of a systematic transition to a more circular economy. This new approach focusses on reducing waste and encourages recycling; to make this shift happen we need new business models and new skills teachings. These changes in the way we treat and use resources will also provide many new green jobs. Important to note here is that the production process and the design process are key for decreasing a products carbon footprint. The need for green skills rises with the hierarchical position of the respective employee within the company. While practical workers may only need small adaptations, high skill occupations need specialized skilling programmes. The skills needed will be re-use, repair, waste prevention and recycling. Those are often the new frontiers of innovation. DG



Environment identified seven of the most resource and energy efficient chains: electronics, vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction and food, water and nutrients.

Mrs. Katharina Tomoff of DHL in her remarks focussed on the way training and education for employees needs to be adapted in order to achieve the green and digital transitions. DHL aims to be carbon neutral in their warehouses by 2025 and in order to achieve that DHL will have trained 80% of their employee's as certified green specialists. This ambitious goal is to be reached by e-learning and offline workshops alike.

Mrs. Bicca Olin, Board Member of the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), in her speech highlighted the student's standpoints on sustainability. For her sustainability in all its ways should be a part of the formal education of VET students. This should also be combined with ethical consumption issues and human rights in the production process. Education should deliver adaptability to a changing work life and a changing industry. In the end, Ms Olin emphasized the need for political engagement alongside local actions. Therefore, she emphasized the importance of bringing innovation and society into the classroom. Education should not be separated from politics and society.

Next **Mr. Franklin Kimbimbi**, Education Officer from the European Trade Union Institute, explained the trade unions perspective. For him meta-competencies are crucial for empowerment and green skills. Collective competencies, cooperation beyond the frontiers of any one company or any one sector, value and ethics competencies, systemic analysis competencies as well as change competencies and perspective competencies are important for empowerment and workers emancipation. The teaching of these skills will make the workers a part of the change.

Panel:

Participants: **Mr. Frank van Hout, Mrs. Sarah Vuittenez, Mrs. Ruth Halle, Mr. Rikardo Lamadrid Intxaurreaga**

The panel discussion revolved around the questions of the contribution of VET to the green economy, the importance of digital skills in the green economy and on the sectors most impacted by green VET. Mr van Hout started off by pointing out that current VET students are the employees of the future and that their training and green consciousness will be crucial for the economic world to come. Ms. Halle emphasised the importance of specialized skills for the green economy. Ms. Vuittenez stressed the significance of commitments and actions from companies, for example through sustainable product design. Mr Lamadrid Intxaurreaga also focused on consciences and a green mind-set, additionally he emphasized the importance of designing VET systems and tracking accordingly.



Furthermore, Ms. Vuittenez mentioned the importance of the Pact for Skills as well as re- and up-skilling later in an employee's career. Ms Halle mentioned the large demand for energy efficiency and circular economy skills.

The panel agreed on the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration and intra company cooperation. Mrs Tomoff elaborated on the relevance of smart and efficient supply chains that do not necessarily need to be local in order to be energy-efficient.

Also mentioned were the shifts emerging from the digital revolution and the role of VET in this. Here the Panel agreed on the huge importance of adopting VET for both the digital and the green transitions, but also mentioned the uncertainty of how the economy changes and hence the problems in transforming VET.

The audience was able to ask the panellists [some questions](#) via the Slido platform.

Ms Rose selected the following questions/reactions:

1. What are the most important sectors for green change? Where can be made the most progress in short time?

Mr van Hout indicated energy, water management, agriculture and transportation as key sectors, with tourism being also relevant. At the same time, Mr van Hout stressed that all the sectors must be included in the transition for the latter to be successful; therefore, any sector impacting on different areas is strategic.

2. Most Green skills will be integrated into traditional professions. What are on the contrary examples of new professions?

Mr Lamadrid Intxaurreaga made the example of professions involving the use of drones, as experimented in some circular economy projects.

Mr van Hout pointed out at digital event management.

3. As the pace of innovation keeps accelerating and as investments keep going to climate and often technical solutions, curricula will need to be updated more often and more dynamically.

Mrs Halle confirmed that the public and private sector need to cooperate in order to keep curricula up to date.

Mr Lamadrid Intxaurreaga pointed to a Spanish programme allowing teachers and students to take part to advanced projects together with companies, in order to keep curricula at pace with innovation.

4. Our food production will be the most implicated by climate change and so by the "green-deal". To be more sustainable, shouldn't we enhance the local production-consumption and limit the long distance transportation? The sector of agriculture is the one with the lowest salaries.

Mrs Vuittenez assured that her company is committed to local procurement. Local production needs to be sustainable, however. Furthermore, it is impossible to rely on local production only, production and transportation have to be optimized.



Mrs Tomoff confirmed that operating only locally is impossible in contemporary economy, and not every local production is green.

5. Do sectors need to work on VET separately or are there cross-cutting elements?

Mrs Vuittenez assured that many partnerships between different actors are already in place and operating successfully.

6. How can we prevent certain sectors that VET affects being sidelined if the headlines are “green VET”? / Will the process of creative destruction catch up with tech progress and secure a sustainable economy by replacing zombi sectors, firms and jobs with new ones (like it did at the onslaught of the industrial revolution)?

Mrs Halle noticed that every VET sector is involved in the green and digital transition.

Mr Van Hout upheld Mrs Halle’s argument. As for the second question, it is not up to VET providers to decide which sector should survive; it is possible that no sector will disappear, rather than undergoing a deep transformation.

Ms Rose then asked the audience to vote on the following question: “Of the 3 issues (shown on the slide panel) debated by the panel just now, which one do you think is the most important for the Commission and stakeholders to develop further?”

The results were:

- The VET contribution to the green economy – 55 percent of the votes
- The importance of digital skills in the green economy – 26 percent of the votes
- The sectors most implicated by green VET – 19 percent of the votes

Closing remarks by Ana Cláudia Valente, Deputy Director, National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training, Portugal

After congratulating the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the success of the Week, Mrs Valente stressed the inclusive value of sustainability.

The importance of VET has been recognized by various European and international initiatives, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, with the European Green Deal highlighting the link between the transition to a greener, fairer and more sustainable economy, on one part, and skills of people of all ages, on the other part.

Furthermore, the European Skills Agenda, the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabruck Declaration have given more impetus to VET in Europe.



In addition to its role in the economic transition described above, VET will be crucial in overcoming the ongoing crisis.

VET schemes must therefore benefit all generations, so that nobody is left behind. This is particularly important, since times of transition tend to create new, but unequal opportunities.

The pandemic, in addition to accelerating the digital transition, highlighted the need for more responsive and resilient VET systems; it also accelerated the digital divide, thus further increasing the importance of VET.

Reskilling, upskilling, lifelong learning and skills anticipation are becoming strategic, but also a matter of social responsibility for policymakers and stakeholders. Dialog, cooperation and coordination are therefore paramount, adding further value to EVSK.

Mrs Valence concluded by anticipating that the Portuguese Presidency will pay special attention to all the issues described above.

Conclusions:

There is a lot of adaptation needed. Adaptation of consciousness towards sustainability, adaptation of VET programmes towards green skills and adaptation of business supply chains. These challenges need cooperation and initiative of all stakeholders involved. While undergoing these transitions it is important to make employees and workers partners and actors in these changes. Europe should honour its social legacy in all the changes to come.